

Achievement: *The road to success is always under construction.*—Lily Tomlin, American comedian, 1939 -



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HED Commander's Comment

Changing with the times

To grasp the importance and success of the Honolulu District one only has to glimpse the thousands of first-class military and civil facilities the District has built, in Hawaii and throughout the Pacific. Through them, the District had an important role in winning World War II and the Cold War, the greatest crises of the past century. The District has also made other enormous contributions to Hawaii's economy and environment through civil infrastructure and regulation. However, while much of our work continues, the times have changed. Failing to adapt to today's circumstances risks the District becoming a victim of its success.

Funding of traditional military construction and repair will likely continue to be tight, as it is for government generally. Further, new philosophies promote privatization and increased intergovernmental competition. Lastly, the revolutionary advances of communications technologies challenge hierarchical institutions. Although many feel threatened, these developments also open opportunities for us. Tight budgets and competition encourage adoption of more efficient practices focused on providing better value to those we serve. While this permits us to serve more customers more flexibly, new technologies allow us to harness more of America's resources more efficiently and more quickly.

Historically, one of the great strengths of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has been its adaptability. Today's Corps' vision to revolutionize effectiveness, invest in people and to better serve the Army calls upon us to make significant changes. It demands we become more responsive to both our customers and the Corps leadership. It calls upon us to employ new practices such as electronic contracting, regional provision of some services and alliances with other organizations.

Despite the difficulties introduced from other reorganizational efforts since 1992, the Honolulu District must continue to adapt. While the cost crisis that required downsizing has abated somewhat, failure to improve our processes to provide more value and efficiency in our work will only prompt future cost crises. The immediate need is to rapidly make any significant structural realignments prerequisite to such improvements. It is equally important to quickly com-

plete the personnel reassignments made necessary by our downsizing and by realignment. The District leadership's ambitious goal is to complete these efforts by the end of 1998. Wherever possible, vacancies will be filled from within the organization, as there are no current plans for involuntary reductions. During 1999 the District will focus on improving our processes so that we can serve our customers better. Beyond 1999 we will seek to expand the range of our services, to appeal to new customers and to reduce our costs. Better management practices and more investment in our people are essential to these long-range efforts.

The senior District leadership is debating how to implement near-term structural changes that will increase our customer focus, truly implement Corps guidance on project management and empower individuals and teams throughout the organization. Increased customer focus is necessary as the result of disappointing customer survey results; our performance is not rising as fast as expectations. We need more cohesive programs and more coordinated work in project delivery. While strengthening program and project management we need to also retain or improve our technical capabilities. Real improvements will not be complete with another organizational chart. They will depend on more effectiveness in working together as teams, better management practices and more decentralized authority. Traditional "functional" approaches will have to give way to "matrix" methods.

I am optimistic about the District's future. In the near-term our budget outlook is now generally positive. Over the long-term, the Pacific remains essential to America's future. There is plenty of opportunity for the Corps in general and the Honolulu District in particular to continue to have vital missions and to be the world's premier government provider of engineering and related services. Whether we will succeed depends on engaging everyone's energies and support in adapting to these changing times. As details make themselves more clear we will keep you informed and try to include you in the debate of key issues.

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